

DRAFT MINUTES
SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BJ's Restaurant
990 N. Center Street
Gaylord, Michigan

January 27, 2004

Chairman Bill Manson called the meeting of the Snowmobile Advisory Committee (SAC) to order at 9:10 a.m. on Tuesday, January 27, 2004 in Gaylord, Michigan.

Members Present:

Bill Manson, Region III, Michigan Snowmobile Association, Grand Rapids
Orville Olson, At-Large, Ludington
Elza Inman, Grant Sponsor, Brethren
James Duke, Region I, Michigan Snowmobile Association, Munising
Bill Lucas, Region II, Michigan Snowmobile Association, Cadillac
Lee Murray, At-Large, Hopkins
Jack Nelson, Business Community, Greenville

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Randy Charles, Forest Service, USDA, Ottawa National Forest

Staff Present:

James McMillan, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management (FMFM), Roscommon
Kim Dufresne, FMFM, Plainwell
Don Klingler, FMFM, Gaylord
Steve Kubisiak, FMFM, Lansing
James Radabaugh, State Trails Coordinator, Lansing
Robin Pearson, FMFM, Gaylord
Creig Grey, Law Enforcement, Lansing
Richard Kennedy, FMFM, Lansing
Joe Jarecki, FMFM, Pigeon River

Chairman Manson introduced and welcomed Jack Nelson as a new member of the Snowmobile Advisory Committee representing the business community. **Mr. Nelson** is owner of Nelson's Speed Shop in Greenville, Michigan.

The Snowmobile Advisory Committee Department staff and audience introduced themselves.

MINUTES

Acknowledged minutes of the December 4, 2003, Snowmobile Advisory Committee Meeting.

Mr. Duke made a motion, seconded by Mr. Inman, to accept the minutes of the December 4, 2003 Snowmobile Advisory Committee meeting. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Gaylord to Cheboygan Work Group

Mr. Manson reported the work group completed its initial report and presented it to Chief Koch. The work group will make a presentation to the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) in February. He said a re-route around Mullet Lake appears to be feasible and they are working on resolving issues relating to use of county roads, limited access highway rights-of-way and Pigeon River Country.

Mr. Manson read a letter of support from the Island Lakes Snowmobile Club and the Cheboygan Area Snowmobile Club. **Mr. Radabaugh** asked Mr. Manson to share the letter with the Gaylord to Cheboygan Work Group.

Mr. Manson will provide an update at the April 13, 2004, Snowmobile Advisory Committee meeting.

Finance Sub-Committee

Mr. Inman reported the sub-committee completed its review of equipment reimbursement rates. They recommend the following top limit rates:

- Regular Tracked Vehicle \$120,000.00
- Combined Unit \$120,000.00
- Wheeled Tractor \$100,000.00
- Drag \$12,000.00
- Brush Cutter in-lue of Drag \$12,000.00

Mr. Lucas made a motion, seconded by Mr. Duke, to accept the recommended top limit equipment reimbursement rates, to take immediate effect. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Mr. Radabaugh said he would review the agreement on proposed equipment reimbursements with Forest, Mineral and Fire Management, and Grants, Contracts and Customer Systems.

Long Range Planning Sub-Committee

Mr. Olson reported the Long Range Planning Sub-Committee is exploring ways to mark trails for emergency evacuation. He believes this is an important issue and noted that there is not currently a statewide standard. He is supportive of developing a standardized system and believes that once one is developed it should be included in the Snowmobile Trail Signing Standards. Discussion ensued. **Mr. Olson** said the

sub-committee is seeking input from snowmobile clubs and will be meeting with various sponsors and emergency response agencies throughout the state. He said his goal is to have a system in place within the next two years.

Mr. Olson noted the need for improved communication between sponsors and field management. He noted that sponsors frequently contact the SAC to resolve disputes. He wants a way to resolve impasses between sponsors and field management. He requested an organizational chart for each management unit that clarifies chain-of-command and a dispute resolution process.

Mr. Radabaugh and **Mr. Olson** will work on a contact list for distribution to the sponsors.

Snow Country Trails Conservancy -- **Mr. Manson** reported on the history and rationale for the development of the Snow Country Trails Conservancy. He said the primary goal is to develop a system of permanent snowmobile trails through the purchase of permanent easements across private lands. The Snow Country Trails Conservancy was incorporated in 2003 as a non-profit 501 3(c) corporation to promote, improve and expand permanent snowmobile trails. **Mr. Manson** said, based on a poll of Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA) membership, eight out of ten are supportive of a fee increase to support the establishment of permanent snowmobile trails. MSA will be working on legislation and will solicit private donations for the conservancy.

STAFF REPORTS

Forest, Mineral and Fire Management

Richard Kennedy, FMFM, Lansing reported on the status of executed grants and said he is working with Grants, Contracts and Customer Systems reviewing the grants handbook and field procedures. He said he has been working on a number of grant amendments and noted sponsor complaints relating to signing and subjectivity of inspectors.

Mr. Radabaugh, FMFM, Lansing reported on the status of the Pere-Marquette Pavement Study and Snowmobile Economic Study.

Robin Pearson, FMFM, Gaylord reported on the status of various trail acquisitions, incident reports and trail proposals in the northeast Lower Michigan management district.

Mr. Radabaugh referred the Committee to the Recreation Specialist Reports in their packets. **Mr. Manson** believes the Recreation Specialists should attend all of the SAC meetings. **Mr. Radabaugh** suggested SAC members contact the Recreation Specialists or Mr. Kubisiak direct, to coordinate follow-up on any items contained in the staff reports that require further investigation or action.

Copies of the Recreation Specialist Reports will be attached to the minutes.

Mr. Radabaugh highlighted the Recreation Specialist reports.

Marquette County -- Discussion ensued about new snowmobile trail crossing permit fees recently initiated in Marquette County. The SAC believes it is inappropriate for counties to charge for a snowmobile trail crossing. It was the consensus of the SAC that the snowmobile program should not pay for road crossing permits. **Mr. Manson** will follow-up with Marquette County.

Fur-Farm Snowmobile Trail -- Discussion ensued about Fur-Farm Snowmobile Trail, and the possibility of identifying a sponsor to take over the grooming. **Mr. Manson** will follow-up with potential sponsors.

Kim Dufresne, FMFM, Plainwell reported on snowmobile activities in the southern Lower Michigan management district. He noted issues relating to snowmobile trail closures in Middleville and noted Parks and Recreation Bureau is developing local trail management agreements that will have snowmobile program implications.

Law Enforcement

Lt. Creig Grey, Lansing explained Law Enforcement Division's (LED) administrative structure and said Captain Curtis Bacon will continue as LED's ex-officio member to the SAC. He highlighted the accident reporting process, the local law enforcement training that took place this winter, and made a power point presentation summarizing the snowmobile fatality statistics for the 2002-2003 snowmobile season. Discussion ensued. **Lt. Grey** invited SAC members to contact him if they have suggestions to improve the accident report. He added that 2004 accident statistics are updated daily and posted on the DNR website at www.michigan.gov/dnr under *Recreation and Camping/snowmobiling*. **Mr. Manson** thanked **Lt. Grey**.

USDA Forest Service

Randy Charles, USDA, Ottawa National Forest reported the Huron-Manistee National Forest, Baldwin-White Cloud Ranger District, has begun initial scoping on a trail proposal submitted by the Lake Shore Snowmobile Club. He spoke in support of agency contact lists for sponsors and the need for improved trail marking for emergency purposes. He believes many sponsor concerns could be addressed at the local level and do not need to be taken to the SAC. He reported representatives from the Huron-Manistee National Forest will attend future SAC meetings.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Bud Longroy, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club requested Mr. Olson include the Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club in future long range planning meetings. He inquired on the status of a grant amendment. **Mr. Kennedy** will follow-up and advise Mr. Longroy.

Tom Gallagher, St. Helen Snowpackers suggested old snowmobile signs be recycled and expressed concerns about sign vandalism.

Bill Taylor, Lewiston Fun Ones noted that Otsego County requires road crossing permits. He believes there is animosity between the local Road Commission and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), in reference to a culvert replacement project. He requested to be added to an email list to receive SAC meeting notices. **Mr.**

Taylor commended Larry Green and Paige Perry, FMFM, Atlanta, for their assistance with the snowmobile program and encouraged the DNR to attend the Groomer's Workshop.

Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club expressed concerns with trail signing standards and subjectivity of inspectors.

Martin Cottle, Sault Ste. Marie Snowmobile Association believes the DNR field contacts need to enforce the new sign standards. He said that the State Police, in his county, are not doing any snowmobile enforcement this year due to budget cuts. He suggested that safety training manuals for snowmobile and off-road vehicles include signs. He noted a need for an "end trail" sign.

Sil Mazzella, Alpine Snowmobile Club said his organization uses front and rear drags on their groomer and asked how this will be addressed in the new reimbursement rates. He noted sign defects including warping and sheeting separation. Samples of defective signs will be provided to Mr. Moore.

Tom Kozlowski, Rosco Higgins Trail Cruisers requested the Recreation Specialist Reports be attached to the meeting minutes. He requested clarification on event policy and when an event permit is required. **Mr. McMillan, FMFM, Field Coordinator, Roscommon**, clarified that if an event is not advertised and no fee is collected, an event permit is not required.

Marino Bernardi does not believe the Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA) represents the average snowmobiler, and is critical of the DNR's management of the snowmobile program. He took a poll of the SAC and stated he rides over 5,000 miles a year on his snowmobile. He asked for status on Deward Tract. He wants the DNR to contact all Snowmobilers.

Ron Palmer, Pere Marquette Snowmobile Club commended Robin Pearson on all the help she has provided to their organization.

Robert Holland, EUPSC, Les Cheneaux Snowmobile Club noted a newspaper article reporting that Mackinaw City received snowmobile funds through the county for snowmobile enforcement on Mackinaw Island. He questioned the appropriateness of this arrangement. **Mr. Manson** said the purpose of the local snowmobile enforcement grants is to provide assistance to counties and municipalities that have snowmobile trails. Discussion ensued. **Lieutenant Grey** will follow-up with Grants, Contracts and Customer Systems.

Bill Taylor, Lewiston Fun Ones spoke in support of the snowmobile enforcement arrangement between the County of Mackinaw and Mackinaw City.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, April 13, 2004, 9:00 a.m., BJ's Restaurant & Catering, 990 N. Center Street, Gaylord, Michigan.

The meeting adjourned at 12:42 p.m.

Public Present:

Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club
Dick Ranney, ORV Trails Advisory Board
Marino Bernardi, Michigan
Tom Gallagher, St. Helen Snowpackers
Bud Longroy, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club
Bob Humpeat, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club
Bud Martin, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club
Dennis Manner, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club
Wallace Daniels, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club
Ilene Geiss-Wilson, Grayling Visitor's Bureau
Bill Taylor, Lewiston Fun Ones
Rodney Maltman, PI Sno Trail, Rogers City
John Houk, Northeast Michigan Snowmobile Council
Tom Kozlowski, Rosco Higgins Trail Cruisers
Herman Bratfish, Rosco Higgins Trail Cruisers
William R. Caskey, Jordan Valley Trail Council
Jim Kostin, Jordan Valley Trail Council, Antrim Co. Snowmobile Club
Errol Lee, Boyne Falls, ORV Trails Advisory Board
Sil Mazzella, Alpine Snowmobile Club
Dave Young, Pere Marquette Snowmobile Club
Ron Palmer, Pere Marquette Snowmobile Club
Jim Barber, Jordan Valley Trails Council
Bob Kaley, Jordan Valley Trails Council
Allen Cottle, Sault Ste. Marie Snowmobile Association
Martin Cottle, Sault Ste. Marie Snowmobile Association
Dobby Holland, EUPSC, Les Cheneaux Snowmobile Club
Matthew Wier-Dieterman, Cadillac Winter Promotions

Western Upper Peninsula Recreation Specialist Report

Ron Yesney

January 27, 2004

Trail Information:

Chocolay Township Trail – The much debated trail through Chocolay Township is now open. Hiawatha Trails is doing the grooming. We have been fairly pleased with snowmobiler behavior and the number of complaints coming in has been relatively low. We have created a complaint form that has been distributed to all the local law enforcement agencies, grooming organizations, convention and visitors bureau, and DNR offices. At the end of the season all complaint forms will be analyzed and a report will be created based on the data from the forms. This data will help us make important decisions regarding future trail management. A trail counter has also been installed on the trail to measure traffic volume on the corridor. We do still need to get the word out to all riders that riding behavior on this trail may influence future trail regulation and our ability to maintain a permanent east-west U.P. corridor.

County Road Crossing Permits – Marquette County Road Commission has changed their policy on issuing permits for trails that cross county roads. The practice is essentially the same - with the change being an additional cost. Each road crossing permit is now being assessed a \$25 fee. Up until now the county had charged \$25 per year for all crossings. This is a substantial change that has Snowmobile Clubs pretty surprised. There is concern about the precedent this may be setting and we are looking for feedback from the M.S.A. on this issue.

Railroad Crossing in Ishpeming – A railroad crossing in Ishpeming has yet to be approved by Canadian National and continues to be a trouble spot in our trail system. Canadian National purchased this rail system last year. This crossing has been in place since the 1970's with easements regularly approved by both LS+I and Wisconsin Central. Steps are being taken to resolve this issue, but as of today, we have no easement to cross this railway in West Ishpeming. Senator Prusi's office has been contacted and they are doing what they can to influence Canadian National by means of informing Canadian National of House Bill #5473 preventing Railroad companies from denying easements to snowmobile clubs for crossing railroad tracks at a 90 degree angle – and hold railroad companies harmless of any liability for such crossings. Moose Country Snowmobile Club is also working with the MI DNR and the City of Ishpeming on a possible reroute. If not resolved soon, we will lose a critical east-west link to our snowmobile system.

Arnold to County Rd. 438- This trail segment changed sponsors this year from Normenco to Hiawatha Trails. There had been some issues that prevented the trail from changing sponsors, being groomed, and being cleared and brushed. I am happy to report that as of January 18th the trail segment has been brushed, groomed, and is under contract.

Big Bay Trail Diversion- A business owner in Big Bay recently took it upon himself to reroute a state trail, move state signs, and cross private property without permission. This was done without permission from the grooming sponsor or the MI DNR. We have a C.O. looking into legally correcting this action.

Wakefield Plymouth Mine Location- The trail from Wakefield to Bessemer currently follows an old Chicago and Northwestern rail line and is groomed by the Gogebic Trail Authority. A new property owner in the area has claimed ownership of the grade and has attempted to stop the trail sponsor from using the grade as a snowmobile trail. The property owner also tried to perform a citizens arrest on the groomer operator and has placed boulders upon the trail. After much

research it is still not clear who owns the grade and we are in the process of hiring a private title company to research this property. A reroute may or may not be necessary.

Acquisitions:

Keweenaw Point Land – The Department has recently taken ownership of an 8,387 acre tract near the tip of the Keweenaw Peninsula. The tract includes 9 miles of Lake Superior Shoreline, several inland lakes, and Manitou Island. A Citizen Advisory Committee has been formed and is in the process of analyzing this 8,387 acre tract. The Advisory Committee will make land management recommendations to the Department. The Advisory Committee has a person (Don Kaupi) on board representing the interests of snowmobilers. The tract currently includes 2 groomed snowmobile trails and several other unofficial trails. The next meeting of this committee is 2-3-04 at 6:00 p.m. at the Allouez Township Community Center in Keweenaw County.

Chassel to Houghton Grade – A citizen advisory committee is being formed to discuss and make recommendations regarding future usage of this newly acquired trail. There is substantial resistance to motorized usage of this trail. Resistance to motorized vehicles is coming mostly from local property owners. The Citizen Advisory Committee does have a MSA delegate (Richard Krupp) appointed to represent snowmobile interests on this trail.

DAN MOORE, Recreation Specialist, Eastern Upper Peninsula
January 27, 2004 SAC meeting notes

Red Creek Bridge – Construction work has ceased for the winter. Footings and support piers have been poured. Bridge expected to be open for traffic on Aug 12, 2004; Project completed by Aug 27, 2004.



Fig. 1. E side looking East

Fig. 2. W side looking West

Fig. 3. Footings & Pillars

Wilder Property – Still have an option to purchase. Working to secure permanent easement across 40 acre parcel south and east of Wilder property. Will help to go straight east into Paradise from the Wilder property.

O'Brien Creek Project – This project is along M-123 in Paradise and creates a snowmobile lane off M-123, to allow snowmobiles to reach several businesses toward the south end of Paradise without running on M-123. Project was completed in early December. Had to make some adjustment to the inside guardrail (see Figure 2.). Curving towards the highway forced the groomer out onto the road. Had to straighten the railing.



Fig. 1. O'Brien Creek, looking south

Fig. 2. O'Brien Creek, looking north

KRC Miller Drag – This drag was finally purchased in late December or early January. Final touches (finishing the hydraulics) in early January. Not sure of actual date of delivery. This is the culmination of many years of effort by the Department, SAC and KRC.



Figure 1. KRC Miller/Compactor-front



Figure 2. KRC Miller/Compactor-rear



Figure 3. KRC Miller/Compactor-side

SAC Report

Submitted by: Todd Neiss
Rec. Spec. WLP
& Southern M.U.

Purpose: This report is in response to Jim Radabaugh's request for a brief update on Snowmobile related issues to be submitted prior to the January 27, 2004 SAC meeting.

Follow-Up to "Old Business" (Dec 4, 2003 Mtg.)

Mesick to Yuma (Wexford County) Cadillac Snowmobile Club HAS received written permission from MDOT to maintain the railroad grade as a snowmobile trail.

Railings for Bridge #907 (Clare County) Railings were installed prior to X-mas 2003.

Paving Project (P.M. State Trail-Evart to Hersey) Various mixes were put down by Reeth-Riley in early winter 2003. No reports received to date—wait until Spring to assess impacts on bituminous mixes.

New Business

New Personnel: Todd Neiss, Hired in mid November 2003 as Recreation Specialist responsible for Western Lower Peninsula & Southern MI. Units.

Vandalism: Traverse City, Manton and Evart F.O.'s report numerous removals of STOP and STOP AHEAD signs.

Safety Issues: Fire Officer's inspecting trails are concerned that current 10 foot wide standard is too narrow due to snowmobile industries manufacturing of wider sleds (skis). Two sleds coming at each other offers little room for error at the current standard width. Suggest SAC review trail standards, and investigate phasing in new, wider trail width standards.

Signage Issues: Despite the "hands-on" signage training with clubs, Roscommon reports that the clubs still did not comprehend all the requirements. Additional training was performed to instill the importance of correct signage. Roscommon is awaiting corrected trail maps so they can properly field # (identify) trails.

Grooming Issues: Gladwin F.O. is looking for input regarding getting out of the grooming business for 2004-2005 at Fur Farm trail. If no club sponsors this section do they close the trail/remove signage?

New Trail: U.S.F.S. is beginning the NEPA process to study a request from Lakeshore snowmobile club to develop a new trail in Mason, Oceana, Lake and Newaygo Counties. Very preliminary—will require DNR input.

EASTERN LOWER PENINSULA RECREATION SPECIALIST REPORT

January 27, 2004

ACQUISITIONS:

Alpena to Hawks, Alpena and Presque Isle County – December 23, 2003 DNR completed the acquisition of 26.05 miles beginning on the east end at the intersection of the inactive railroad corridor and US-23 and on the west end at Hawks. This includes a correction of a ¼ mile gap on the east side of Hawks. This corridor stretch is railbanked under federal law. This recent acquisition now creates a 90 + mile long rail trail corridor from Alpena to Mackinac City.

Rogers City Spur to Limestone Quarry Boundary, Presque Isle County – December 23, 2003 DNR completed the acquisition of 6.7 miles of railroad corridor from a point approximately 2 miles west of Posen on the Alpena to Mackinac Rail Trail and extends north to the current endpoint, which is one mile north of US-23. This corridor is railbanked under Federal Law.

Rogers City Spur thru Limestone Quarry & North to Roger City, Presque Isle County – DNR have under option with the Railroad Company the railroad corridor that travels through the quarry and north to Roger City and expect to complete this transaction in 2004. This corridor will be railbanked under Federal Law.

Paxton Spur, Alpena County – December 23, 2003 DNR completed the acquisition of the one mile stretch of rail trail corridor between Herron Road and King Settlement Road, T31N, R8E, Section 30. This completes a stretch between the west side of the city of Hillman to the Southwest side of Alpena, except for an approximate two mile gap in T31N, R5E, Section 13.

Harlan to Yuma, (Viaduct Road – Yuma Corridor), Manistee and Wexford County – No new news on this acquisition. WLP Recreation Specialist area of Todd Neiss' now, so he will report on updates for this one from now on.

INCIDENT REPORTS:

Otsego County, Lakes of the North – A snowmobile fatality occurred on or about 12-10-03 near the intersection of Northgate Drive and Heatherwood Court on property owned by Lakes of North. Inspection by DNR field staff confirmed the accident did not occur on a State designated snowmobile trail, but approximately ½ mile away.

Crawford County, Trail #79 – A snowmobile fatality occurred shortly before noon 12-22-03 on trail #79 approximately one mile south of Howes Lake Road, which is northwest of Grayling. Crawford County Sheriff's Dept. and DNR Conservation Officer John Huspin are handling the investigation, but DNR field staff reported that a single snowmobile left the trail and hit a tree and that trail signage appeared adequate and to standards.

TRAIL PROPOSALS:

Bellaire Snowmobile Spur Trail, Antrim County – Jim Radabaugh and Robin Pearson were invited to meet with Representative Ken Bradstreet, his aide Brian Mills and key individuals from local snowmobile club and community to discuss the Department's concerns with the proposal

and status of the request. DNR staff is willing to look at proposals by applicant that will address or avoid the Fisheries, Wildlife and Natural Rivers Program concerns. Jim Radabaugh will meet with primary DNR contact Don Klingler to discuss where we go from here.

Perry Road/Wolverine Re-route, Cheboygan County – Alpine Snowmobile Club and City of Wolverine requested a re-route of snowmobile trail where it enters Wolverine on the west side. Proposal was submitted to DNR by Alpine Club, which was reviewed by staff and approved by the Department 11/24/03 with the stipulation that DNR staff will monitor snowmobile use and evaluate any impacts to the known Elk habitat and Eagle's nest along this route.

Alpena Connector, Alpena County – A proposal for a new trail was submitted to Atlanta FMU to connect trail #4 and #992. Field staff forwarded to Bill O'Neill identifying FMFMD and Wildlife staff concerns. Field level review recommended denial. Bill O'Neill explained the concerns and reason for denial to Larry Marzean in a phone call and recommended the club discuss the concerns with Unit Manager, Dayle Garlock and Wildlife staff if they wished to understand them or discuss them in detail further. Bill submitted trail proposal and recommendation for denial to Jim Radabaugh in Lansing. Jim Radabaugh drafted a three page response as to why the proposal was denied and forwarded this to Bob Eller. Larry Marzean states a formal written response explaining the reasons why the proposal was denied has never been received by the applicant.

Blue Bear to Mancelona Connector, Antrim County – Applicant was to submit alternative proposal per Don Klingler who did not accept the original proposal. I have heard no further word on this specific proposal. (See Don Klingler, Gaylord Filed Office for status)

REQUESTS, INQUIRIES, NEWS, ETC:

Communication Reminder – I have received calls and letters regarding problems, concerns or questions by club members. I have been instructed to remind everyone that any concerns should first go to their primary DNR contact person assigned to them and if you feel you are not making headway with that person for whatever reason the next contact should be to their supervisor. It is important that any problems, concerns or questions first be handled by the primary DNR contact person or their supervisor. If need be they will contact me if they require my assistance.

Grooming Workshop – I have been asked to inquire about when and where the next grooming workshop will be held. I have a DNR staff member who grooms one of our DNR maintained trails who would like to attend.

Vandalism – I have heard multiple reports of snowmobile sign and sign post vandalism this year. We could all help by asking the public to report any vandalism activities they witness or have information about. One option is to call the DNR's RAP line which is available 24/7 at 1-800-292-7800. Jim Kostin wrote a good article that appeared in several local